I'm speeding down the road in a desperate attempt to make it somewhere; anywhere. My shoulder is finally starting to hurt. We've passed out of the woods and we're now roaming through rolling hills of farmland. Dust kicks up behind us as the truck bolts over dirt roads. The only thing crossing my mind is getting of here as quickly as possible. Then the vehicle dies. Idiots. They must have been planning on fueling up on the way home. Just great.

"Come on Cassie, we've got to start walking again."

"No."

I blink. "What."

"I said no. I saw—"

"I know what you saw. I had to do it. If the police catch us, then you're going back to your father. Do you want that?"

"Stop lying to me!" Cassie says.

"I'm telling the truth."

"Just like you were telling the truth when you called me Jessica? Just like you told the truth when you were talking on the phone?" Cassie folds her arms.

"Cassie," I say. I look to the horizon, just waiting for us to get caught. "If they knew the truth they would have turned us in. I did it because I'm trying to help you."

"No," Cassie says as she undoes her belt. She struggles to get out of the car and I grab her arm. She screams. I let go in sheer shock.

"You lie, and hurt, and steal," Cassie shouts. "You're a bad man and I don't want your help anymore. I—I just want to go home."

Cassie leans against the truck and starts squirming to the ground. She's got her face cupped in her hand as tears drizzle to the floor below. I touch her shoulder, but she squirms away from my grasp. She doesn't want my help. The truth howls in the air. There is so much I can say to my defense, but my mouth doesn't want to move. Nor does the rest of my body.

A dulling ringing sinks my soul to new and unbearable lows.I'm staring down a dragon, the essence of truth. It's the ugliest beast that I have ever dreamt of. Multiple omniscient eyes stare me down, bloodshot. It breathes an inferno that sears my flesh and burns my bone. The words it speaks tell tales of death and despair. My throat contorts in new ways to create some kind of shield to shelter me from the torment that has sunk its hooks under my skin and is struggling to tear me to pieces.

"Cassie, try to understand. I'm trying to protect you," I whisper, trying to ensnare the siren's song in my words.

Either I have failed yet again, or Cassie has grown so accustomed to honey traps that the sweetest sounding stories have bitter ends. It seems that my story is no different. I try every incantation I know to pierce through Cassie's armor, go around her shield, but there's no longer denying anything. She's done with me.

"Cassie please!" I shout in vain. At this point I'm just speaking to fill the air, sending up flares in dead and empty waters. It's a cool comfort, but it's the only one I can find between turning to the roads behind us and turning toward Cassie's reddened face.

"Look Cassie, I'm sorry. What was I supposed to do—"

"No, you're not sorry," Cassie parries. "I know when someone's not sorry."

I reach out, and try to reel her back in to my safety but she fervently reminds me that she's done. She pushes my hand away, practically sneers at me, and then disappears into the fields of corn. I have no choice but to break the bindings of emotion and follow her, or at least try to. Finding anyone in such a place would be a difficult task, but finding a child who has made it her goal to avoid you is nigh impossible. I search for a sight of red cast upon the golden yellows and verdant green of the endless fields, but the more I seek the further she gets.

I shout out for Cassie, but there's no response. I dash through the Burroughs of the maze. I plead for some semblance of solace, but it seems that Eden has shut its doors to me. I ride my memories back to the past and try to find a different way to paint the picture of my innocence. Perhaps those men wouldn't have been as harsh a critic of character as Cassie is now.

I cut past the corn in my way, desperately thrashing out, desperately calling out. I don't see her. I'm not going to see her. She knows how to hide, and she'll keep hiding until we're both exhausted. My stomach lurches with a storm of emotions. The pleading goes nowhere. The searching goes nowhere. I'm on the verge of collapsing.

A synergy of worry and panic bind my bearings. I forget the road. I forget the escape. I focus on finding Cassie. I almost don't see the sparks of blue and red flashing over a sea of harvest. Shit. They're here. I stop shouting. I dive below the fields and begin sneaking my way further and further away from defeat.

I don't need to look to see. It's just a pretty prediction. They're looking through the car to see if I left any clues. They're looking through the fields to see if they can find me. And Cassie, she's probably going to run to the police and end this timeless charade. It's the moment before the world collapsed. The dream begins showing through to the day. Buildings crumble and cracks spread through the sky.

I run through Armageddon as the world crumbles behind me, searching for salvation. I can't find her no matter how hard I search. I hear the trumpet blasts of hell behind me. They saw me. In the dead silence I hear boots crunching on tilled soil. I go for broke, get up, and start charging. The screams behind me try to shoot

me down, to get me to stop.

I don't. All of the threats are meaningless. My arm becomes grazed with pistol-fire. Even as the pain is set alight I keep at it. I'm not stopping—shoot me in the arm, shoot me in the leg, or shoot me in the head.

My lungs join in the fire. I look around for some kind of reprieve. The only thing I see even remotely close is a barn, spireing out over the fields. It's too damn far. Gunfire again. This time it missed. I would be counting my blessings if they were any left to be counted. A third shot is heard and I fall to the floor, struggling to catch my breath before the cops get any closer.

I turn onto my back and see the storming force rushing towards me. From the voices before I could tell that there was more than one searching for my hide, but all I see is one chasing after me. He's far enough away for me to seek out one of my oh-so-clever plans. I've given up hope a long time ago, but I have some semblance of the emotion that my pitiful plan will work and not just place Cassie and I in a worse scenario.

His gun gleams silver in the sunlight. If I move he'll shoot. He was willing to fire in order to peg me down before, and he'll fire again to make my capture a certainty. He pushes away the stalks of corn as he comes ever closer. I squint my eyes and silently pray to a god that I've become sure doesn't exist anymore.

I don't speak. He doesn't speak. All he does is inch his expression to one of contempt. He's so cocky that he has lowered his running speed to a gentle walk. A victory dance for him is a breath and a plan for me. He's not stupid enough to move the gun away from a direct line to my forehead. I move in the slightest and the soil will be fertilized with my brain and body in a few fractions of a second.

My eyes don't break contact with his. There's some glimmer of righteous justice hidden behind the pitiful sneer. He knows what I've done but doesn't have the slightest clue why. If he did maybe he would be able to predict my next course of action, with the awareness of how damned sad and desperate I am. He gets closer. I cup my hands in the soil. My legs twitch and writhe. My shoulder reminisces the gun that nearly broke it. I grit my teeth, and wait for the inevitable.